Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

30 May 2014

Original: English

Maputo, 23 - 27 June 2014
Item 8 of the provisional agenda
Informal presentation of requests submitted under Article 5 and of the analyses of these requests

Request for an extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with Article 5 of the Convention
Executive summary

Submitted by Yemen

1. Eritrea has been a scene for major conflicts for over half a century leaving it with a massive legacy of Landmines and Explosive Remnants of war (ERW). It is one of the hardest hit countries in Africa by this scourge. The war between British and Italians during World War II left behind a significant amount of ERW. Following the war, and contrary to the wishes of the Eritrean people, the United Nations decided to annex Eritrea to Ethiopia under a federal arrangement. When Ethiopia abrogated the federation in 1962, the Eritrean commenced its struggle for self-determination which culminated in independence in 1993. The legacy of the three decade war of independence, however, was a huge nationwide landmine and ERW contamination. In 1998, Ethiopia waged a war of aggression against sovereign Eritrean territories sparking a two year border conflict. During the war massive defensive landmines were planted by the Eritrean defence forces, notwithstanding to the landmines that the Ethiopian armies planted in the Eritrean territories that they have occupied. Inevitably the subsequent wars have left the country with atrocious threat and contamination of landmines and ERW.

2. The effects of landmines and ERW had noticeably gone beyond killing and maiming of people. Its impact on the social and economic progress of the nation could not be understated. The vast majority of the mine impacted communities in Eritrea depend on farming and herding for their livelihoods. The widely scattered landmines and ERW have impeded farmers from cultivating their land and herders from freely moving their herds in search of better grazing land and water. Moreover, the negative impact of landmines and ERW on constructions and other development projects were noticeable especially in Southern and Gash-Barka regions. Over the course of the initial extension period a total of 52 people fell victim to landmines in the Central Region, Southern Region, Anseba Region, Northern Red Sea Region and Gash Barka Region with nine having been killed and 43 injured? Victims included 26 males under 18 injured and six killed, six males over 18 injured and two killed, ten females under 18 injured and one killed and one female over 18

injured with most of them injured or killed when herding or walking for their daily activities.

3. Eritrea acceded to the Mine Ban Treaty on 27 August 2001. As part of a fulfilment to its obligations under the Treaty, a national mine action was established in 2002. The establishing proclamation (123/2002) stipulated the responsibility of the Eritrean Demining Authority (EDA) as: coordinating and managing Mine Action in Eritrea with the task of clearing landmine and returning areas to productive use, educating Eritrean civilian of the dangers of mines and on ways to identify and report them; clear mined areas to facilitate the repatriation of internally displaced persons and refugees and integrate mine action into the national development plans.

4. Faced with this tantamount challenge, the Eritrean Government commenced a nationwide landmine and ERW clearing efforts soon after independence as well as after the conclusion of the Eritrea Ethiopia border conflict in 2000. This massive landmine clearance effort in affected areas was undertaken by Eritrean defence forces engineering units and preparations for humanitarian mine action became operational in 2001. It is important to note that in the aftermath of the border conflict, there was an increase in Humanitarian Mine Action activities organized by National Mine Action and a number of foreign organizations, such as: Danish Church Aid, Danish Demining Group, HALO Trust, RONCO, Mine Awareness Trust and UNMEE Contingencies using a wealth of mine clearance tools including manual, mechanical, and dogs engaged in mine clearance and ERW destruction operations. However, judged against the huge capacity in terms of finance, technology and personnel the results achieved was not satisfactory. This led to the overall restructuring of Mine Action activities including the phasing out of the contracts of the foreign organizations as well as the suspension of UNDP's Mine Action Capacity Building Program.

5. The first nationwide effort to identify the Landmine and UXO contamination was through a Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) conducted between March 2002 and June 2004. The survey identified 914 Suspected Hazard Area (SHA) encompassing 129 square kilometres nationwide and affecting 411 communities. It was also identified that 751 of the SHAs as contaminated by AP mines, a mix of AP and AT mines or a mix of AP mines, AT mines and ERW. The contaminated areas spread on the six administrative regions as follow: **(203)** in Anseba, **(112)** in Southern, **(12)** in Southern Red Sea, **(107)** in Gash Barka, **(72)** in Central and **(246)** in Northern Red Sea.

6. With limited support from the UNDP, the EDA resumed demining program that included activities such as: mapping, marking of affected areas, Mine Risk Education to the former IDPs and Mine Clearance activities on a limited scale more focused in the IDPs/Expellees return/resettlement areas. In the absence of external assistance, the EDA has been employing cheapest and relatively effective methods easily applicable to carry out mine clearing operations with the limited resources and capacity that is locally available.

7. Demining is primarily carried out by the engineering units of the Eritrean defence forces. Trained and certified deminers with Standard Operating Procedures among those teams are tasked under the supervision and quality assurance of the EDA. The EDA through its Operations and QA/QC departments carries the responsibility of all aspects of quality assurance and quality control standards according to the National Mine Action Standard (SOP). All individuals deployed or involved in the humanitarian mine clearing task are trained and aware to be responsible for quality assurance. Quality checks are included at all levels of mine clearance tasks. The site supervisor ensures all aspects of quality assurances at all levels. He/she ensures the suitability of demining methods to the site, as well as monitors the result of clearance and adjusts the clearance method. The EDA conducts its mine action activities in close partnership with affected communities and local

administration. The widely spread community volunteers continue to perform important task of educating of landmine and ERW risks and monitoring incidents.

8. It is the strategic aspiration of the Government of Eritrea to have a mine free state and Eritrea has been tackling these issues in order to overcome Article 5 challenges. However, flaws in the initial conduct of the Survey including overlapped records, the massiveness of the contaminated areas, lack of adequate funding and shortage of operational equipment impeded Eritrea from fulfilling its mine clearance commitment within ten years as stipulated in Article 5 of the Convention. In 2011, Eritrea submitted an "interim" request for extension of an initial period of three years with the aim of conducting resurvey by non-technical survey methods to properly identify the remaining challenge and develop an appropriate plan for the implementation of Article 5 of the Convention and was granted a three year extension period (February 2012 – February 2015).

9. Accordingly, the Eritrean mine action authority drafted five years national strategic plan from 2011 – 2015. This plan was based on the review and updating of the 2005-2009 strategic objectives with total budget assessment of **8.5** million US dollars, expecting partial coverage of it (**4.5** million US dollars) by external support to carry out the following objectives: (a) make area reduction by at least 50 per cent conducting resurveys until 2014; (b) continue clearance of land mines and ERW according to the social impact priorities ; (c) continue to conduct Mine Risk Education activities to sensitize communities to reduce new casualties until full clearance is assured. To achieve these, the EDA proposed to deploy demining teams in the impacted location of:

(a) Anseba --- Halhal, Keren, Haboro, Geleb, Hagaz and Kerkebet

(b) Northern Red Sea --- Karora, Mahmimet, Afabet and Shieb.

10. During the transitional extension request, a non-technical survey was proposed with the aim for quick area reduction. Such a survey would enable Eritrea to reach a correct assessment of the remaining contaminated areas which in turn could be crucial at assessing the operational time frame. In preparing the proposal for the non-technical survey task, it has been assumed that a big area reduction can be done from the LIS data record which was executed from 2002 to 2004. This assumption was based on our estimation from observations on the ground that although the LIS served as a bench mark for the humanitarian mine action progress, it had so many overlaps in its mined area records. Other than this, some areas were cleared by the military engineers very early after the conflicts but not cancelled yet until recently because non-technical survey verification and assurance was needed to fulfil completion protocols for cancellation. Such assumption is asserted timely by the fact that huge portion of the operational achievements is attained by non-technical survey tasks.

11. Accordingly, non-technical survey teams were deployed in the following sub-regions:

(a) Anseba Region: Hagaz, Keren, Halhal, Geleb, Elaberid, Hamelmalo, Asmat and Aditekelezan

(b) Northern Red Sea Region: Karora, Afabet, Shieb, Foro and Massawa

(c) Southern Red Sea Region: Central Denkalia, Southern Denkalia, Assab and Araata.

(d) Central Region: Serejeka, Gala Nefhi and Berik

12. The survey teams conducted their task in close collaboration with the relevant partners including Mine Risk Education teams, the community volunteers, regional administration offices, relevant military engineers to gather information on the LIS recorded mined areas. EDA teams collected information based on a pre-prepared

questionnaire which includes questions such as: After military demining since 20 years had there been any incident of landmine in the location? Are the communities using the location for their daily purposes? If you believe the previously LIS recorded area is having partial impact only, where does it lie? When teams got satisfactory information from informants, the EDA declared an area mine free and cancelled from the impact list. After full clearance or NTS cancellation is justified, the EDA contacts the Regional and sub-regional administrators for the declaration of the cleared areas and safe usage of the land.

13. In the transitional extension request of March 2011, Eritrea has reported that out of 751 mined areas identifies as baseline by the LIS, 79 areas covering an area of 30,852,678 square meters had been cleared. Hence, at the time of submitting its initial extension request, referring the LIS records Eritrea reported a total of 672 areas measuring a total of about 98 million square meters remaining. Furthermore, in the past three years a total of 287 areas measuring a total of 73,702,463 square meters have been cleared and cancelled by NTS. Of these 38 mined areas measuring 5,667,968 square meters have been cleared identifying and destroying in the process 1,064 anti-personnel mines, 34 anti-tank mines and 2,218 ERW and 249 areas have been cancelled through non-technical survey measuring 67,325,361 square meters.

14. Therefore at this stage, total number of areas addressed since the LIS are 366 covering 104,555,141 square meters and the remaining impacted number of mined areas is supposed to be 385 with total area coverage of about 24.5 million square meters.

15. While much progress has been made in terms of clearing impact areas identified in the LIS, there has been 49 new mined areas discovered in the five regions of the country, namely:

(a) Gash Barka region: Agordat and Shambuko.

(b) Central Region: Serejeka, South-east and Berik,

(c) Southern Region: Areza, Debarwa,Dekemhare, Segeneiti, and Senafe.

(d) Anseba region: Keren, Hamelmalo, Elabered,Halhal and Habero.

(e) Northern Red Sea Region: Afabet and Nakfa.

16. This new discovery of mined locations covers total area of about nine million square meters. Thus Eritrea remains 434 mined areas covering total area of about 33.5 million square meters which needs to be addressed by clearance encompassing Technical Survey and may be small amount including the new discovered mined areas need NTS.

17. Although a lot of work has been carried out, owing to the multifaceted challenges that Eritrea faces in the area of landmines and the unfortunate discovery of new contaminated areas, the Government of the State of Eritrea requests Five Year Extension Period (February 2015 to February 2020) not to complete Article 5 obligations by 2020 but to accomplish the resurvey task parallel to the demining operations to identify the actual mined area needing thorough demining operations. Having substantial transitional period, we will be able to gain more clarity which leads us to the right assessment for the final report of the remaining contaminated area to be reported at the end of this requested period.

18. EDA will attempt to conduct resurvey in the remaining 434 mined areas which cover 33.5 million square meters with the available national human and financial resources. It also plans to deploy at least five demining teams which could be increased if adequate logistical and financial support is found. To achieve better results EDA is in a midst of organizational restructuring at all levels. At the present, EDA's human capacity is as follow:

(a) Five demining teams with each demining team having 64 person = 320.

(b) Three EOD teams with each team having 5 person = 15

(c) Two Survey teams with each team having 5 person = 10

(d) Two Q/A teams with one team having 5 person = 10

(e) Ten MRE teams with one team having 4 person = 40

(f) 150 community volunteers

19. Following an updated training the demining teams are expected to be deployed and conduct demining associated with technical survey in the following priority regions:

(a) Anseba region: Hagaz, Keren, Halhal, Geleb, Elaberid, Hamelmalo, Asmat,

(b) Kerkebet,Habero and Aditekelezan

(c) Northern Red Sea region: Karora, Mahmimet, Afabet, Shieb, Foro and Massawa

(d) Gash Barka Region: Haikota,Teseney,Gogne, Agordat,Shambuko

(e) Central Region: Serejeka, Gala Nefhi and Berik.

20. Non-technical survey will mainly be conducted in the following impacted locations:

(a) Northern Red Sea Region: Karora

(b) Southern Red Sea Region: Areata, Assab, Central Denkalia, Southern Denkalia

21. Past experience has shown that each demining team will be deployed to conduct demining operations according to the priority areas with assumed clearance rate of **384000** square meters per team per year and **1,920,000** square meters per five teams per year. Therefore the total clearance progress planned for the five teams in five years period is calculated to be **15,360,000** square meters. This figure is the maximum attainable efficiency assumed under regular and fulfilled operational conditions but may be ambitious if taking into account the inevitable collaboration (working together) of the demining teams with the re-survey teams to accomplish the outstanding and priority task which is to make optimal area reduction.

22. The overall total budget required for the five years extension plan (2015-2020) is estimated **7,166,800** US dollars. Having proposed this projection, the State of Eritrea through the EDA will relentlessly continue its effort using, with utmost efficiency, of the human, material and financial resources existing and that it might acquire to expedite mine clearance program and fulfil its obligations before the dead line proposed under the limited national capacity.